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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
SOURCE METHOD EXEMPTION 3B2B
NAZI WAR CRIMES DISCLOSURE ACT
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24 January 1963

SUBJECT: Recruitment of Prisoners of War by the KGB and Predecessor Organizations

DATE OF INFORMATION: 1960 and earlier

1. The information below has been provided by DS-2137, a former KGB officer whose bona fides has been established and who is considered usually reliable. The following information on the recruitment of POWs conforms closely to information previously received on the subject. [] , for example, reported on his experience as a member of a Committee of Information (KI) recruiting team which toured Japanese POW camps in the Russian Far East in 1948.

2. In approximately 1960, Source read articles in the KGB Journal /Comment: The Chekist Journal (Chekisty Sbornik) is a classified monthly intelligence magazine published by the KGB since 1958./ and in several KGB documents /sic/ quoting reports submitted by agents who had formerly been detained as "war criminals" in Soviet concentration camps. One such agent, who already had been repatriated to West Germany, reportedly informed Soviet state security that leaders of the Ukrainian nationalist movement who were still in prison in the USSR had tried to establish contact with the West by various means, including the utilization of "war criminals" who had been repatriated /Comment: Source presumably means that concentration camp inmates were in touch with the West through channels opened by former inmates now residing in the West/.

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Note: Heinrich W. BAGATAIS ([]) was a Soviet POW who was released by Soviets (to West Germany) in 1946 or 1947.

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3. Some years ago Source made a study of state security documents covering the period 1949 to 1952 concerning the recruitment of prisoners of war. He recalls that he determined that 50,000 to 100,000 agents had been recruited among Austrian prisoners of war, but he does not recall any figures for other nationalities. At one time there had been a directive to recruit all prisoners of war, even those who would not be useful, in order to keep them from making undesirable statements in the press after their release. This recruitment campaign was conducted both during and after World War II. All prison camps were instructed to provide for special state security "indemnity" units which would be involved in recruiting prisoners. /Comment: The term "indemnity" units, for which the Russian original was not given, may originate from the fact that these units guaranteed amnesty to prisoners in exchange for agreement to work for state security after their release. / Special groups of the GRU (Soviet military intelligence) were also sent at a later date to every prison camp to engage in a recruitment campaign. Subsequently, special state security groups were sent to the Japanese, Austrian and German prisoner of war camps with the task of recruiting prisoners who might conceivably be employed in the military or intelligence service of their own country after repatriation. Source recalls having seen material in the KGB archives in 1960 concerning approximately ten West German generals and colonels /unidentified/ who had been recruited as Soviet agents during the period 1949 to 1952.

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